

NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE

VIRGINIA CONSERVATION PRACTICE STANDARD

RESTORATION AND MANAGEMENT OF DECLINING HABITATS

(Acre)

Code 643

DEFINITION

Restoring and conserving rare or declining native vegetated communities and associated wildlife species.

in Section I of the Virginia Field Office Technical Guide (FOTG).

CRITERIA

GENERAL CRITERIA APPLICABLE TO ALL PURPOSES

PURPOSES

- Restore land or aquatic habitats degraded by human activity
- Provide habitat for rare and declining wildlife species by restoring and conserving native plant communities
- Increase native plant community diversity
- Management of unique or declining native habitats

Note: NRCS uses the term “wildlife” to include all animals, terrestrial and aquatic.

- Methods used will be designed to protect the soil resource from erosion.
- Vegetative manipulations to restore native plant and/or animal diversity can be accomplished by prescribed burning or mechanical, biological or chemical methods, or a combination of the four.
- Management measures must be provided to control invasive species to attain optimum community function. Noxious weeds must also be controlled in order to comply with state and local noxious weed laws.
- To benefit insect food sources for animal species, spraying or other control of noxious weeds will be done on a limited basis. This will also help protect forbs and legumes that benefit native pollinators and other wildlife.
- Management practices and activities are not to disturb cover during the primary nesting period (April 1 – August 15). Exceptions could be granted for periodic management when necessary to maintain the health of the plant community or to meet specific requirements of target species. Mowing or other management measures may be needed during the establishment period to control weeds.

CONDITIONS WHERE PRACTICE APPLIES

On any landscape which once supported or currently supports the habitat to be restored or managed. In Virginia, this applies to communities such as longleaf pine, Atlantic white cedar wetlands, pocosins, oak dominated wetlands, mountain bogs (especially bog turtle habitat), maritime forests, shale barrens, karst topography, dune systems, and native grasslands. Other declining habitats can be identified using Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR)/Division of Natural Heritage (DNH) maps and consultation procedure (See NRCS Threatened and Endangered Species Procedure

Conservation practice standards are reviewed periodically, and updated if needed. To obtain the current version of this standard, contact the Natural Resources Conservation Service.

- Rotate periodic planned management or other treatments throughout the restored/managed area.
- Prescribed burning will normally be utilized in longleaf pine and native grassland communities.
- Any planted species will be adapted to soil site conditions.
- Only high quality and adapted native seed and plant material will be used. Use plant stock and seed from the closest possible local source.
- Attention to planting dates, and care in handling and planting of the plant material will optimize the rate of survival for the established vegetation.
- Site preparation shall be sufficient for establishment and growth of selected species.
- Timing and use of equipment will be appropriate for the site and soil conditions.

CONSIDERATIONS

Confer with other agencies and organizations such as DCR/DNH, The Nature Conservancy, and Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries to develop site specific guidelines and specifications. Contact the NRCS State Biologist for assistance.

In many cases threatened and endangered species or species of concern benefit from conservation of declining habitats. Follow-up habitat assessments shall be performed to monitor success and determine management needs.

All habitat manipulations will be planned and managed according to soil capabilities and recommendations for management will avoid excessive soil loss.

PLANS AND SPECIFICATIONS

Specifications for this practice shall be prepared for each habitat type on the site. Specifications shall be recorded using approved specifications sheets, job sheets, narrative statements in the conservation plan, or other acceptable documentation.

OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE

It is vital that actions shall be carried out to ensure that this practice functions as intended throughout its expected life. These actions include normal repetitive activities in the application and use of the practice (operation), and repair and upkeep of the practice (maintenance).

Any use of fertilizers, pesticides and other chemicals shall not compromise the intended purpose of this practice, but must meet the Virginia Conservation Practice Standards *Nutrient Management (Code 590)* and *Pest Management (Code 595)*.

REFERENCES

1. Endangered Ecosystems of the United States: A Preliminary Assessment of Loss and Degradation, by R. F. Noss, E. T. LaRoe, III and J. M. Scott, USGS Biological Resources Division.
2. Virginia Natural Communities and Ecosystems, Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation, Natural Heritage Program (<http://www.dcr.state.va.us/dnh/>).

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Approved Practice Narratives
(Acre)
(CODE 643)

643 D1 Restoration and Management
of Declining Habitats: Apply appropriate
practices to restore a declining or rare plant-
animal community. Specific guidance to
establish and retain the area in a restored
condition will be provided.

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